

Male and female God created them.

*As the climax of creation, God makes man and woman in God's own image.
"And God found it very good."*

BACKGROUND

Perhaps you never noticed, but there are two creation stories in Genesis, each telling of the origin of life on earth and describing the creation of human beings. This passage is taken from the first, the more formal and theological of the two stories. The first story, Genesis 1:1—2:3, is about the seven days of creation. The second, Genesis 2:4–25, is about the garden of Eden and the creation of Adam from clay and Eve from Adam's side.

The first story reveals a very important truth: God created all things, and all things God created are good;

and in this good and orderly world, God's greatest creation is the human being.

In describing each of the days of creation, the author highlights God's power and the order of the creation. Humans are created last, bringing to a climax God's creative initiative. But this powerful God who speaks a world into existence, who creates by just saying, "Let there be . . ." is also a caring God who grants "dominion" to humans and who takes time to look at and appreciate everything that was made. At last, God finds it "very good."

WHY WOULD YOU CHOOSE THIS TEXT?

The start of a marriage is a good time to be reminded that God made all matter, and that all God made is good. God gave humanity a dignity different from that of all other creatures. And God gave a command to the woman and man to fill the earth and care for it.

Your future plans may not be so ambitious as filling and tending the earth, but every marriage is an invitation to participate in God's creativity by becoming channels of God's creative power. Your sexuality, rearing

children, caring for the environment, being a good steward of the material possessions entrusted to your care may be some of the ways you let that creative power flow through you.

This reading, at the start of your marriage, can serve as a reminder that the life of the body is a great good, and that the physical things around you need not be distractions but can instead be pointers to the great creative mystery that lies behind them.

“Humankind” would be more inclusive than “man” throughout this reading.

Pause after “God said” to shift into the voice of God.

Don’t rush. “See” each image before you speak it.

Slower, with a sense of awe and majesty.

Faster pace. God’s voice is authoritative but loving.

Much slower. Make eye contact. Speak with joyful emphasis.

A reading from the book of *Genesis* ...

God said: ••

“Let us make *man* in our *image*, • after *our* likeness. ••

Let them have *dominion* over the fish of the *sea*, •

the *birds* of the *air*, • and the *cattle*, •

and over *all* the wild *animals* •

and all the *creatures* that *crawl* on the ground.” •••

God *created* man in his *image*; ••

in the *divine* image he created him; ••

male and *female* he created them. •••

God *blessed* them, saying: ••

“Be *fertile* and *multiply*; ••

fill the earth and *subdue* it. ••

Have *dominion* over the fish of the sea, •

the *birds* of the air, •

and *all* the living things that move on the *earth*.” ••

God *looked* at *everything* he had made, ••

and he *found* it • *very good*. •••

The *word* of the Lord. •••

Man and woman become one body.

The loving Creator makes woman and man suitable partners for each other so that in marriage they can “cling to one another” and “become one body.”

BACKGROUND

The book of Genesis tells the story of creation twice. This passage is from the second telling, a more human and earthy story in which a mother-like God is intimately involved with creatures.

In this less grand and cosmic but more vividly told story, God doesn't *speak* humans into existence; instead, God digs around in the dirt and forms the first human being from the mud of the ground. Then, with parental

thoughtfulness, God parades all the other creatures past the human, and when none proves a worthy partner, God tries again.

God's actions are graphically described. The intimate rapport depicted here between Creator and creatures becomes a characteristic of the Old Testament of much of the interaction between God and the world.

WHY WOULD YOU CHOOSE THIS TEXT?

Some people have made much of the fact that this creation story depicts a man being created before a woman. Their conclusion: first made is best made. But a careful reading of this text reveals that other interpretations are possible and are probably more authentic to the spirit of the story.

Because none of the creatures God presented the man were suitable partners, God reaches right into the man, at the place near his heart, and uses one of his own bones to fashion a woman. Whereas the man was made from mud, the woman is created from human bone and flesh.

Adam's response is abounding joy at seeing one who “at last” is “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,” that is, an equal, full partner. In the creation stories of other peoples, women were fashioned from the head or feet of men. But the Hebrew people said no; women were formed not to be above or beneath men but to be alongside them. The final line of the passage tells of the equal dignity shared by woman and man: The husband “clings” to his wife and becomes “one body” with her.

A reading from the book of *Genesis* ...

You can make a subtle change in voice when you shift from narrator to God.

The *Lord God* said: ••
“It is not *good* for the man to be *alone*. ••
I will make a suitable *partner* for him.” ••

Be a storyteller telling a fascinating tale.

So the Lord God *formed* out of the *ground* •
various *wild animals* • and various *birds* of the *air*, ••
and he *brought* them to the man •
to see what he would *call* them; ••
whatever the man called *each* of them •
would be its *name*. •••

Don't rush the list of creatures.

The man *gave* names to all the *cattle*, •
all the *birds* of the air, • and all the *wild animals*; ••
but *none* proved to be the *suitable* partner for the man. •••

Pause, as if God is thinking what to do next.

The story grows more interesting, perhaps almost hushed.

So the Lord God cast a *deep sleep* on the man, •
and *while* he was asleep, • he took out *one* of his *ribs* •
and *closed* up its place with flesh. ••

Spoken with great dignity, and growing louder.

The Lord God then built up into a *woman* •
the rib that he had taken from the man. ••
When he *brought* her to the man, • the man said: ••

Slowly. Spoken with a mix of wonder and delight.

“*This one*, • at *last*, • is *bone* of my *bones* •
and *flesh* of my *flesh*; ••

Pause.

This one shall be called ‘*woman*,’ ••
for out of ‘*her man*’ • this one has been taken.” •••

Slowly.

That is why a man *leaves* his father and mother •
and *clings* to his *wife*, ••
and the *two* of them become *one body*. •••

The *word* of the Lord. •••

Rebekah said, “I do,” and she became Isaac’s wife.

*Rebekah leaves homeland and family to marry Isaac,
who loves her and believes she is the bride God has selected for him.*

BACKGROUND

Here is a wonderful love story from the book of Genesis. The key here is the loving kindness that Rebekah shows even to the thirsty camels of a servant. Such love becomes a sign of God’s own love.

Abraham had left his own land to live among the Canaanites. Now old and approaching death, he determines that his son Isaac must marry from among his own people. So Abraham commissions his servant to return to his homeland to find there a bride for Isaac.

The servant asks God to give him a sign to indicate which young woman God has chosen for Abraham’s son. When the beautiful Rebekah comes to a well to draw water, she not only gives the servant a drink but also offers to draw water for his camels as well, a gesture of loving kindness that is the very sign the servant asked for. The servant learns that Rebekah is the granddaughter of Abraham’s brother, so he asks permission to bring her to Canaan to marry Isaac.

WHY WOULD YOU CHOOSE THIS TEXT?

Arranged marriages like the one described here might make a good topic for a television talk show, but they’re a far cry from our notions of romantic love. Yet this story has a twist: In an age when women were regarded as property, with no rights and no choice in matters that affected them, Rebekah was asked if she consented to marriage. She spoke the familiar words, “I do.”

In an earlier age this passage might have seemed to emphasize the submission of women. Today it can emphasize trust in God’s care and guidance.

This is a beautiful love story: The servant leaves the choice of a bride to God, and once God reveals that

choice, everyone, including Rebekah and Isaac, embraces it gladly. By trusting in God’s will, both young people are able to accept the difficult task of leaving home and family in order to join the spouse God has chosen for them.

A couple who are well aware of the role their families have played in readying them for married life can find value in this reading. Unfortunately, this passage in the lectionary is a bit bare; it’s hard to tell what’s going on at first. In this book we provide a few additional verses, Genesis 24:42–46, that can help cue the hearers in on what is transpiring.

GENESIS 24: 42–46

The following verses are printed here to set a context for the reading:

The servant of Abraham said to Laban: “When I came to the spring today, I prayed: ‘Lord, God of my master Abraham, may it be your will to make successful the errand I am engaged on! While I stand here at the spring, if I say to a young woman who comes out to draw water, Please give me a little water from your jug, and she answers, Not only may you have a drink, but I will give water to your camels too—let her be the woman whom the Lord has decided upon for my master’s son.

“I had scarcely finished saying this prayer to myself when Rebekah came out with a jug on her shoulder. After she went down to the spring and drew water, I said to her, ‘Please let me have a drink.’ She quickly lowered the jug she was carrying and said, ‘Take a drink, and let me bring water for your camels, too.’ So I drank, and she watered the camels also.”

Verses 42–46 above can create a context for this reading.

A reading from the book of *Genesis* •••

Laban = LAY-bin.

The *servant* of Abraham said to *Laban*: ••

“I *bowed down in worship* to the Lord, •
 blessing the Lord, • the God of my master *Abraham*, •

Awe and joy at God’s intervention.

who had led me on the *right road* •
to obtain the *daughter* of my master’s kinsman • for his *son*. ••

If, therefore, you have in mind to show *true loyalty*
to my master, • let me *know*; ••

Not an ultimatum but a simple request for an answer.

but if *not*, • let me know *that*, too. ••

I can then *proceed* accordingly.” •••

Pause and shift voice before assuming character of new speaker. Laban accepts God’s will.

Laban and his household said in *reply*: ••

“This thing comes from the *Lord*; ••

we can say *nothing* to you either *for* or *against* it. ••

Rebekah = Ruh-BEK-ah. They present a sister they love, not a possession to sell.

Here is *Rebekah*, • *ready* for you; ••

take her with you, • that she may become the *wife*
of your master’s *son*, •

as the *Lord* has said.” •••

Pause, then shift to voice of Rebekah for “I do.”

So they *called* Rebekah and *asked* her, ••
“Do you wish to *go* with this man?” ••
She answered, •• “I *do*.” ••
At this • they allowed their sister Rebekah and her nurse
to take *leave*, •
along with Abraham’s servant and his men. •••

Prayer for many descendants.

Invoking a *blessing* on Rebekah, • they said: ••
“Sister, • may you *grow* into *thousands* of myriads; ••
And may your *descendants* gain possession
of the gates of their *enemies!*” •••

Then Rebekah and her maids *started* out; ••
they mounted their camels and *followed* the man. ••
So the servant *took* Rebekah • and went on his way. •••

Isaac = I-ZIK. Beer-lahairoi = Bear-LAY-high-roy. Shift in location and in mood. Renew your energy.

Meanwhile • *Isaac* had gone from Beer-lahairoi •
and was living in the region of the *Negeb*. •••
One day • toward evening • he *went* out . . . in the field, •
and as he *looked* around, •

Spoken with Isaac’s curiosity.

he noticed that *camels* were approaching. •••
Rebekah, *too*, was looking about, •

Spoken with Rebekah’s surprise and interest.

and when she *saw* him, •
she *alighted* from her camel and *asked* the servant, ••
“Who is the *man* out there, •
walking through the fields *toward* us?” ••

As if whispered, but without really whispering.

“That is my *master*,” • replied the servant. •••
Then she *covered* herself with her *veil*. ••

Servant feels justifiably proud.

The servant *recounted* to Isaac *all* the things he had done. •••
Then *Isaac* took *Rebekah* into his *tent*; ••
he *married* her, • and thus she became his *wife*. ••

Slowly. Your tone suggests their growing love.

In his *love* for her •
Isaac found *solace* after the death of his mother • Sarah. •••

The *word* of the Lord. •••

Your marriage is decided in heaven!

Having found her through the aid of an angel, Tobiah asks for Sarah's hand in marriage. Her father acknowledges that theirs is a marriage "decided in heaven."

BACKGROUND

The Book of Tobit is one of seven books included in the Roman Catholic Bible that are not included in Protestant and Jewish Bibles. Though recognized by all as good and worthy books, only Catholic and Orthodox Christians use them in worship.

Tobit is written in the form of a religious novel. That means that though there may have been a historical kernel around which this story is built, the author's main interest is to teach and inspire, not to present history.

The book of Tobit contains many small doses of prudent advice about everyday life. Like the other "wisdom books" of the Bible, Tobit employs many maxims, wise sayings, that teach moral living.

Tobit is a popular book that reads like a Grimm Brothers' tale, and yet it contains important and even unusual themes, like the role of angels, the value of prayer and charity, reverence for parents and the purity of marriage.

The customs of the time when Tobit was written favored marriage between relatives. This practice ensured

that family property and lands remained within the clan. If marriage to someone outside the clan took place, wives who had inherited family property would take it with them to their husband's tribe, thus unsettling the careful balance that had been established among the twelve tribes of Israel.

Since Sarah, the young heroine of the book, had no brothers to inherit her father's property, her inheritance would become her husband's possession if she married outside the clan and it would then be passed on through his family line.

Sarah had married seven times, each time to a relative, and each husband died on their wedding night! There are now, she believes, no other relatives whom she can marry. Soon, however, Sarah and the book's other hero, Tobiah, discover they are related as distant cousins. Needless to say, their love seems to come with an unusual and an enormous risk.

WHY WOULD YOU CHOOSE THIS TEXT?

Among the readings suggested for wedding liturgies are some that are so expressive of the cultural situation in which they were written that the truth they express is difficult for modern ears to hear. Such readings require a special effort from the homilist, who must fill in the necessary background information that will make the passage understandable to the assembly. This selection from Tobit is such a text.

At the time of its composition, marrying a relative was a common practice, as was the negotiation of marriage by means of a contract. Unless they are adequately explained, these can be rather confusing and distracting details.

But the selection also expresses the richness and beauty of the love a woman and a man give each other in marriage, and it acknowledges that peace and prosperity can enter a marriage only if the partners invite God to be part of their relationship.

The theology of marriage expressed in Tobit, and clearly articulated in this reading, envisions the marriage bond as created by God from the beginning of time. The partners, it suggests, are chosen for one another by God. Parental desire for and efforts to secure their children's happiness is another powerful feature of this selection.

A reading from the book of *Tobit* •••

Tobiah = Toe-BY-uh. *Raphael* = RAY-fee-el. “Brother Azariah” is another name for the angel *Raphael*. *Azariah* = Az-uh-RYE-uh.

Tobiah said to *Raphael*, ••
 “Brother Azariah, ••
 ask *Raguel* to let me *marry* my kinswoman *Sarah*.” ••

Raguel = RAG-you-el.

Raguel overheard the words; •
 so he said to the boy: ••

Upbeat and enthusiastic.

“Eat and drink and be *merry* tonight, •
 for no man is *more* entitled to marry my daughter *Sarah*, •
 than *you*, • brother. ••

As if explaining an obvious point.

Besides, • not even *I* have the right
 to give her to anyone but *you*, •
 because you are my *closest* relative. ••

Slower; more relaxed.

But I will *explain* the situation to you very *frankly*. ••
 She is *yours* according to the decree of the *Book* of *Moses*. ••
 Your *marriage* to her has been *decided* in *heaven*! •••

Speaking an important truth.

“Take your kinswoman; ••
 from now on • *you* are her *love*, • and *she* is your *beloved*. ••
 She is yours *today* • and ever *after*. ••
 And *tonight*, • son, • may the Lord of heaven
prosper you both. ••

There is a poetic quality to these lines.

A sincere prayer.

May he grant you *mercy* and *peace*.” ••

A bit faster tempo.

Then *Raguel* *called* his daughter *Sarah*, •
 and she *came* to him. ••
 He took her by the *hand* •
 and *gave* her to *Tobiah* with the words: •

Let us live together to a happy old age.

On their wedding night, Tobiah and Sarah begin their marriage by praying for God's blessing on their union.

BACKGROUND

For additional background information on this text, please see the commentary on Tobit 7:9–10, 11–14.

The book of Tobit presents an incredible and fascinating story. Two of its main characters are blameless, holy people who are afflicted with great misfortune and who pray for death as a means of escaping their terrible fate.

One of these characters is Tobit, a wealthy and pious Jew who has been blinded and impoverished despite his many good deeds. The other is Sarah, a young woman who is tormented by a demon. Seven times she has married, but each husband has been killed on their wedding night by the demon Asmodeus. In her grief, Sarah has prayed for her own death. Hearing the prayers of these righteous individuals, God sends Archangel Raphael (who is disguised) to help them both.

Long before, Tobit had deposited a large sum of money in Media (a city in what is now Iran). So he sends his son, Tobiah, to that distant city to reclaim the money. Raphael accompanies Tobiah and teaches him to use the gall, heart and liver of a fish he has captured to make “useful medicines” that will heal his father’s blindness and deliver Sarah from the demon. When Tobiah arrives at the house of Sarah and her parents, and after discovering that she is a relative, Tobiah falls in love with her and, with encouragement from Raphael, determines to marry her.

Despite his fear that Tobiah will die and leave Sarah a widow for the eighth time, her father agrees to their marriage. Tobiah and Sarah now turn to God in prayer, and they ask that the demon be cast out and that they be permitted to live together in happiness and peace.

WHY WOULD YOU CHOOSE THIS TEXT?

Although the healings of Sarah and Tobit appear to be produced through magical means, the book stresses the role of prayer, not magic, in reversing Tobit’s blindness and in expelling the demon from Sarah. At every significant moment in the book, in fact, the characters stop to pray.

This particular passage draws attention to the importance of prayer in a marriage. By taking time to pray together on their wedding night, Sarah and Tobiah make prayer the foundation of their union. Moreover,

by referring to the second creation story (see the commentary on Genesis 2:18–24), in which God acknowledges that “it is not good for the man to be alone,” Sarah and Tobiah’s prayer of praise affirms that marriage was from the beginning a part of God’s plan for humanity.

The joys and pleasures of matrimony are no mere human invention, this selection asserts; they are instead an expression of God’s benevolent will.

A reading from the book of *Tobit* ...

A calm, quiet tone.

Tobiah = Toe-BY-uh.

Greater intensity. "Ancestors" is more inclusive than "fathers."

Build intensity.

You're making your case: Here's point one.

Here's point two.

Here's the conclusion.

Slow down on last four words.

On the *wedding* night • Sarah *got up*, •
and she and Tobiah started to *pray*
and beg that *deliverance* might be theirs. ••
They began with these words: ••

"*Blessed* are you, O God of our fathers; ••
praised be your name *forever* and ever. ••
Let the *heavens* • and all your *creation* •
praise you forever. ••

"You made *Adam* • and you gave him his wife *Eve* •
to be his *help* and *support*; ••
and from these two the *human race* descended. ••
You said, •• 'It is not *good* for the man to be *alone*; ••
let us make him a *partner* like himself.' ••

Now, Lord, • you know that I take this *wife* of mine •
not because of *lust*, •
but for a *noble* purpose. ••

"Call down your *mercy* on me and on her, •
and allow us to live *together* • to a *happy old age*." •••

The *word* of the Lord. •••

Set me as a seal on your heart.

Young lovers express their attraction for each other and acknowledge the great power of love.

BACKGROUND

Rarely heard at worship (and little known, especially among Catholics), the Song of Songs is a biblical book containing beautiful poetry that expresses, in rich and sensuous imagery, the joys and goodness of sexual love between a man and woman.

Essentially a collection of love poems, Song of Songs touches on many themes that express the feelings of lovers. The poems give voice to the lovers' admiration of each other's physical beauty, their mutual love, their declarations of fidelity, their longing for each other, their recollections, and the book even includes some gentle teasing.

Jews and Christians have found a common religious interpretation of the Song of Songs. Both see it as an

inspired depiction of the love between God—who is the lover—and people—the beloved.

On a literal level, the book paints a portrait of ideal human love. The answer to the question, "What does scripture say about human sexuality and the attraction between a man and a woman?" is largely found in this book. But because human sexual love can symbolize the love of God for humanity, because human love is a mirror of God's love, and because one cannot really be understood without the other, the Song of Songs is an expression of a deep mystery, and it is mystical and wondrous to hear.

WHY WOULD YOU CHOOSE THIS TEXT?

Here is a book of the Bible that begins, "Let him kiss me with kisses of his mouth!" Many who read Song of Songs for the first time are amazed to discover such earthy and sensual language, such frank discussion of physical beauty and sexual attraction, in the pages of scripture.

Yet it is the very first chapter of the first book of the Bible that says, "Male and female God created them." God invented sexuality, not anyone else. It's goodness is affirmed from the very beginning of scripture. Yet a great many people remain uncomfortable discussing sexuality in a religious context.

A wedding can be a perfect time to celebrate the goodness of human sexuality and the loving fidelity between a man and woman that are so powerfully and candidly expressed in this book.

Because this book is set in spring, when "the flowers appear on the earth," the Song of Songs is read in the synagogue during Passover; this reading may be perfect for a springtime wedding. If your wedding occurs in the spring, perhaps you can pencil in verses 11 through 13 from chapter 2 of the Song of Songs ("For see, the winter is past . . ." [see reading #784.5 in the lectionary]), which are left out here in this particular reading for weddings.

Remember, this is song-like poetry. **A reading from the Song of Songs ...**

“Hark” means “listen.”

Build intensity.

Hark! • my lover— • here he comes •
springing across the mountains, •
leaping across the hills. ••

My lover is like a gazelle
or a young stag. ••

Imagine the images you describe.

Here he stands behind our wall, •
gazing through the windows, •
peering through the lattices. •••

Slower tempo.

My lover speaks; • he says to me, ••
“Arise, my beloved, • my beautiful one, • and come! ••
O my dove in the clefts of the rock, •
in the secret recesses of the cliff, •

Entreating.

Let me see you, •
let me hear your voice, ••
For your voice is sweet, •
and you are lovely.” •••

A summary of all that preceded.

My lover belongs to me • and I to him. ••

Slow and with feeling.

[He said to me:] ••
Set me as a seal on your heart, •
as a seal on your arm; ••

“Stern” means “strong.”

For stern as death • is love, ••
relentless as the nether world • is devotion; ••
its flames are a blazing fire. ••

Slow your pace.

Deep waters cannot quench love, •
nor floods • sweep it away. •••

The word of the Lord. •••

I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

God promises to make a new covenant: God's law will be etched into our hearts.

BACKGROUND

Among the options for weddings, this is the only selection from the books of the prophets. Prophets were not always people who foretold the future. They were individuals who “spoke for another,” which is the meaning of “prophet.” The biblical prophets spoke for God.

The prophet's was a thankless job. Often, in fact, they complained about the situations their vocation put them in. Called by God, and bubbling over with God's message, they announced the message to people who usually were not interested in listening.

A great reality in the life of the people of Israel was the notion of being a chosen people. But being God's people brought responsibilities. It was the prophets' unpopular job to remind the people that their very lives depended on their fidelity to the covenant that made them God's own.

WHY WOULD YOU CHOOSE THIS TEXT?

It might seem odd to consider choosing a wedding reading that talks about law. After all, a wedding day is a time to dwell on love freely given and received. What do laws have to do with that?

The Jewish notion of law differs from the narrow understanding we sometimes hold. Instead of seeing laws as limits to freedom, Jews believe that God's law sets them free to become the good and godly people they are called to be. Because the law reminds them to live justly, because it offers a defense against the abuse of others, because it calls them to full and loving personhood, the Jews understand the law as one of God's greatest gifts.

But history is a succession of promises made and broken, of lessons learned, forgotten, and learned again. Jeremiah's prophecy looks forward to a time when that pattern will be broken, when the hearts of men and women will know God's ways so well, and will love God's desires so much, that no forgetting and

Besides troubling the comfortable, prophets comforted the troubled, and it was in the Israelites' most hopeless times that prophecy flourished.

The people of Jeremiah's day were very much in trouble. The Babylonian empire moved against the Jewish nation and against Jerusalem. The people were herded into exile. Jeremiah preached the unpopular message that, because this was the will of God, the Babylonians should not be resisted.

But the prophet also offered the hope of ultimate rescue. This reading contains that message in a sublime form. It expresses the promise of a new relationship with God, a new covenant that would be written forever on the heart rather than on stone.

relearning will take place. The ways of God will be within human flesh.

In a marriage ceremony, the bride and groom exchange vows. But vows are not a contract that binds the partners to do this or that; they are promises, written on the heart, to “know” one another in the fullest sense.

Inevitably, the couple will experience pain and disappointments in their marriage. They will remember the promises they made to each other on their wedding day and know they have fallen short. But they can also remember that their love is a reflection of the love between God and people.

They can remember that the prophecy of Jeremiah can eventually be fulfilled in their living out of their marriage vows. The words of love they expressed on their wedding day can become truth through the grace of God working in them.

A reading from the book of the prophet *Jeremiah* •••

Don't rush. Jeremiah creates anticipation.

The days are *coming*, • says the Lord, ••
when I will make a *new covenant* with the house of *Israel* •
and the house of *Judah*. •••

The memory of this great day lingers. "Ancestors" would be more inclusive than "fathers."

It will *not* be like the covenant I made with their *fathers* •
the day I *took* them by the hand to lead them *forth*
from the land of *Egypt*. ••

Faster tempo.

But *this* is the covenant which I will make with the *house*
of *Israel* • after those days, •
says the Lord. ••

Now slower.

I will place my law *within* them, •
and *write* it upon their *hearts*; ••

Build intensity.

I will be their *God*, •
and they shall be my *people*. ••

"Kinsfolk" would be more inclusive than "kinsmen."

No *longer* will they have need to *teach* their friends
and kinsmen •
how to know the Lord. ••

With authority and conviction.

All, • from *least* to *greatest*, • shall *know* me, •
says the Lord. •••

The *word* of the Lord. •••